



Natural Heritage &
Endangered Species
Program

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
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MASSACHUSETTS SPECIAL CONCERN PLANTS

SALTPOND PENNYWORT
(Hydrocotyle verticillata Thunberg)

Description

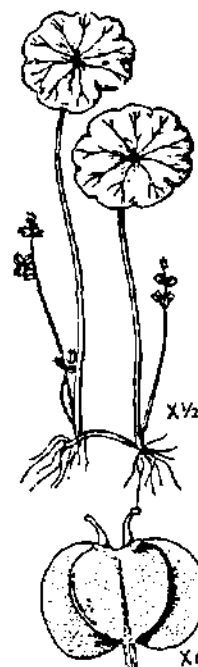
The Saltpond Pennywort, a member of the parsley family, is a small (4-6 in., 10-15 cm tall), delicate, aquatic herb with orbicular leaves up to 6 cm (2 1/4 in.) in diameter, commonly with 8-14 shallow lobes. There is no central, erect stem; rather, leafstalks and flowering shoots are produced at intervals along subsurface stems. The inflorescence is a simple spike up to 15 cm (6 in.) long, with 3-7 few flowered whorls of 2-7 flowers each. Flowers are sessile, or on short stalks in var. triradiata. Flowers are produced when plants are stranded, July-September.

Similar Species in Massachusetts

H. umbellata (Water Pennywort) is very similar to Saltpond Pennywort in size and leaf shape but flowers differ. H. umbellata has only a single whorl of many flowers.

Habitat in Massachusetts

Saltpond Pennywort grows along sandy to peaty margins of brackish ponds very near the ocean. Usually these ponds are separated from the ocean by just a narrow sand barrier. Associated species may include Spartina pectinata (Cord-grass), Scirpus americanus (Chair-makers Bulrush), Chenopodium glaucum (Oak-leaved Goosefoot), Pluchea purpurascens (Saltmarsh Fleabane), and Ranunculus cymbalaria (Seaside Crowfoot).

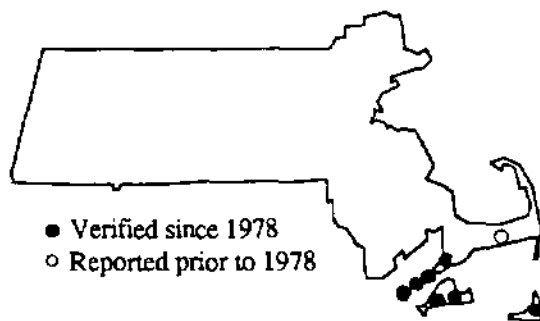


Gleason The New Britton and Brown Illustrated
Flora of the Northeastern U.S. and Adjacent
Canada NY Botanical Garden, 1952.

(continued overleaf)



Range of Saltpond Pennywort



Massachusetts Distribution by Town

SALTPOND PENNYWORT (continued)

Range

This species ranges on the coastal plain and piedmont from Massachusetts to Florida and Texas. It is also scattered westward to Oklahoma, Missouri, California, Utah, and Nevada. In addition, it is found in tropical America.

Population Status

Saltpond Pennywort is listed as a species of "Special Concern" in Massachusetts. Currently there are 11 sites where it occurs; historically there were an additional 6 sites where it occurred. In Massachusetts this species has always been rare, presumably because of climatic limitations northward. The small size of most of the ponds leaves them vulnerable to hurricanes and other coastal processes.